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ABSTRACT

Described are programs sponsored by the Atlanta, Georgia, community which has accepted the "community of believers" concept espoused by the Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools. According to the concept, the community at large must believe that each student is capable of learning, our educational system can teach students, our economic future is dependent on the educational achievement of the masses, and every person in the total community has a vested interest in the public school system. The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, started in 1981, is Atlanta's greatest testimony to its confidence in the concept. An example of its many programs is the Adopt-A-School Program, which allows business firms, colleges, and religious organizations to adopt a school or program. The adoptor and adoptee agree on what they can do together and draw up a one-year contract. All activities are student-centered, e.g., the Affirmative Action Job Placement Program, student tutorial activity. To date, more than 150 businesses, colleges, and service organizations have provided services to the schools estimated at over one and a half million dollars. (RM)

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"A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS"

The Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education, Inc. Second Anniversary Report

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In the fall 1981 issue of Daedalus, an article appeared entitled "A Community of Believers." The author was Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, Dr. Alonzo A. Crim. The article put into printed form a word picture which Dr. Crim had described numerous times in the preceding year as he had spoken to civic, educational, parent, religious, and political groups both in Atlanta and on the national scene.

Dr. Crim's "Community of Believers" concept revolves around the public schools and includes belief in several forms and directions. First, there is the belief felt by the student. The student must believe in his or her own worth and own capability. Next, the student must believe that there is a realistic payoff/reward that results from staying in school and achieving an education. Finally, the student must believe that persons who have quote, "made it" in the American system care what happens to him.

Second, there is the belief felt by non-students within the education system. This group includes teachers, school administrators, support staff, and parents. Their belief must be the same as that of the students and the actions and attitudes of this group must continually communicate to the students a sense of "hot hope" rather than a sense of impending failure.

Third, there is the belief felt by the community at large. Belief by the community at large must include, as a minimum, these elements: (1) Each student is a valuable person fully capable of learning, (2) Our system of education, when operating at acceptable effectiveness, can teach the students, (3) The economic future of the nation is dependent on the educational achievement of the masses, and, therefore, (4) Every person in the total community has a vested interest in the public school system.

The Atlanta community at large has both heard and accepted the conceptual picture of the "Community of Believers" as described by Dr. Crim. The acceptance, perhaps, is best manifested by the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education, Inc., in its development and present activities.

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The "Community of Believers" in Atlanta might be visualized, structurally, as a body of water. On the water is a fleet of four ships moving in formation. The flagship is the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education. This flagship is responsible for its own maintenance and direction. Each of the other three ships is self-maintaining but is in communication with the flagship to assure that the fleet stays in formation, with the result being that the "ships of the fleet" all move in the same direction and with a common plan.

Along with the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education flagship, the other three "ships" are: The Atlanta Council of PTAs, the Superintendent/Deans' Breakfast Club, and the Religious Community Partnership. These three organizations will be described briefly followed by a more detailed description of the Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education.

The Atlanta Council of PTAs is self-governing with a President and Executive Committee. The Council is comprised of all the Atlanta City Schools. During the 1981-82 school year, membership exceeded 10,000. Attainment of the 1982-83 goal of 15,000, although a startling goal, appears to be a reality. Student advocacy is the central theme of the Council.

The Superintendent/Deans' Breakfast Club consists of the Superintendent of the Atlanta Public Schools and the Deans of the various schools and colleges of education in the Atlanta area. This group meets for a one- to two-hour breakfast meeting at least once a month. Issues, resolutions, and programs of collaboration are the order of the day for these meetings which are always held with "open agendas."

The Religious Community Partnership takes several forms. Although most contacts between the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education and the various religious groups come under the broad umbrella of the Metro Atlanta Christian Council, activities also include the Interfaith Council and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Individual congregations of all faiths are invited to contact the Atlanta Partnership.

Teaching of religion to the students is not in any way a part of the collaborative activities between the school system and the religious community. The major program is student tutoring in reading and mathematics. This takes place two ways — through individual volunteer efforts of congregation members with various schools or through group efforts wherein a congregation as a group "adopts" one school for which tutorial services would be provided.

One unit of the Religious Community Partnership is Joint Urban Ministries. This unit, under the auspices of the Metro Atlanta Christian Council, establishes "clusters" of congregations to work with the Tenant Associations and residents of the various public housing projects which are under the Atlanta Housing Authority. At the midway point of the 1982-83 school year, 22 of the 24 Atlanta public housing projects were working with the religious community through the "cluster" arrangement. Eighty-three congregations, local and suburban, were active in the 22 clusters. Activities include student tutoring, family counseling, health services, food banks, clothes banks, and others. Each cluster sets its own agenda and develops its own program.

The Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education, Inc., no doubt, is Atlanta's greatest testimonial to its confidence in Superintendent Alonzo Crim and the Atlanta School System. The PARTNERSHIP, reminiscent of the mythical goddess, Minerva, sprang forth to the earth almost full grown. The birth took place on January 27, 1981, at an Industry-Education Seminar at Georgia State University, with 68 charter members providing the PARTNERSHIP a very firm foundation on which to build. The seminar was the culminating event resulting from six months of preparation.

The simultaneous occurrence of three major forces set the stage for formation of the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education. These were: (1) Along with development of the "Community of Believers" concept, Superintendent Crim and the Atlanta Board of Education announced a goal that by June 1985, the average standardized test results for Atlanta in the basic literacy skills would be at or above the National Norm. (2) An Economic Development Task Force which had been established and put to work several months earlier by the City Council president, Marvin Arrington, submitted its final report with findings and recommendations. Two major conclusions were the dependence on a high quality public school system if Atlanta were to be a viable center of economic growth and the need for close cooperation between the business community and the school system. (3) Research Atlanta completed its report, "The 80's, Decade of Decision," by

listing Education as one of the major issues facing Atlanta and alluding to the same type of needs just described by the Economic Development Task Force.

Dr. Boyd D. Odom, Management Consultant to Superintendent Crim, was given the assignment of coordinating activities to explore the feasibility and subsequent methodology of establishing a three-way partnership composed of the Atlanta Public Schools, the overall business community, and the metro Atlanta college community. The religious community, although not "business," represented organizations with organizational structures similar to those of business and were, thus, initally considered to be allied to the business community, although the steering committee would be meeting separately with them.

Mr. Thomas K. Hamall, Executive Vice President of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, agreed to chair a steering committee to work with Dr. Odom with the goal being the establishment of a school-business-college partnership as previously described. Mr. Hamall proved to be of immeasurable value during the six months of planning. Other key members of the steering committee included Dean Sherman R. Day of Georgia State University, Acting Dean Barbara Hatton of Atlanta University, Associate Dean Joseph A. Richardson of Georgia State University, Ms. Joyce Daniels of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and other Chamber representatives.

Dr. Noah Langdale, Jr., President of Georgia State University, pledged his full personal support, as well as that of the University, to development of the proposed Partnership, since the steering committee had agreed on its feasibility and anticipated value to the city.

A three-person executive steering committee was named: Dr. Crim, Mr. Hamall, and Dr. Langdale. A letterhead was designed bearing the logos of the three organizations which they headed — The Atlanta Public Schools, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and Georgia State University. This letterhead was used for all communication throughout the planning months and all three men signed all letters of major importance.

In November 1980, work began on creation of a twenty-two minute video tape by the Atlanta Schools telecommunication center titled "Partnership of Progress." The film was made to explain the Partnership structure and purpose as being proposed. The theme of the film was mutuality of benefit that would accrue to the community as a whole if the Partnership were to become operative. Among the dignitaries appearing on film and endorsing the partnership concept were: Dr. Alonzo A. Crim; Dr. Sherman R. Day; Mr. A. D. Frazier, Chairman of the City Council Task Force on Economic Development; Mr. Thomas K. Hamall; Dr. Norris L. Hogans, Principal of Carver High School; Dr. Noah Langdale, Jr.; Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President of the Atlanta Board of Education; Dr. Michael A. Mescon, holder of the Chair of Private Enterprise at Georgia State University; and Mr. Dan Sweat, Director of Central Atlanta Progress.

Two hundred fifty-six invitations were mailed by the executive steering committee to college presidents and business chief executive officers inviting them to a two-hour luncheon seminar at Georgia State University to take place on January 27, 1981. Approximately two hundred attended the seminar where they enjoyed a fine meal, heard inspiring speeches favoring the Partnership formation by Governor George Busbee, Dr. Alonzo Crim, Dr. Michael Mescon, and Master of Ceremonies, Thomas Hamall.

The film, "Partnership of Progress," was viewed followed by fifteen minutes of open discussion, questions, and answers. Finally, application blanks were circulated by which those present could enroll the organizations which they represented as charter members.

Sixty-eight applications were completed and returned at the seminar, thus, establishing the PARTNERSHIP.

Immediately following the seminar, the steering committee was adopted as the Charter Board of Directors of the Partnership. In the following months, steps were taken to Charter the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education, Inc., as a tax-exempt non-profit corporation under Federal Internal Revenue Service Revenue Code 501 (c)(3). Tentative approval was granted forthwith with tax-exempt status officially being granted on March 18, 1982.

During the month of February 1981, two seminars took place involving the school system and the religious community. These meetings were hosted by Central Presbyterian and Union Baptist Church. Congregation leaders, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, were present at the seminars and were invited to join together as had been the former case with the business leaders, in support of the Atlanta Schools.

Forty congregations pledged to work with the school system in roles of youth advocacy and student tutoring. This group became the initial religious community mailing list for the Atlanta Partnership.

The interim president of the Atlanta Partnership, under whose guidance a smooth and stable beginning was a reality, was Mr. L. Edmund Rast, President of Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, Inc. The first elected president to serve under the state charter was Mr. James M. Zimmerman, President of Rich's, Inc. The first Executive Director was Dr. Boyd D. Odom. In February 1982, Superintendent Crim assigned Dr. Lowrie A. Fraser as System Representative to the PARTNERSHIP.

The Atlanta Partnership began with nine programs which it supported within the school system. Of the nine, four were jointly sponsored with the Atlanta Chamber of Commmerce. Assessment of interests, needs, and accomplishments became a continuous process and by the second year of operation, the PARTNERSHIP, which by now numbered more than 150 members, was focusing, and continues to focus, mainly on four programs. These are: ADOPT-A-SCHOOL, Affirmative Action Job Placement, Advisement, and Student Tutorial. As goals for the programs are established by the Board of Directors, a task force to work for goal attainment is appointed by the PARTNERSHIP president.

The ADOPT-A-SCHOOL program allows the business firm/college/congregation to "adopt" a school or program within the school system. This means that the adoptor and adoptee agree on what they can do together and draw up a one-year contract. Activities take a variety of forms but, in all cases, are student centered. At the midpoint of the 1982-83 school year, 70 schools and/or programs were under "adoption" by 122 organizations.

The Affirmative Action Job Placement program deals with the bottom quartile of the senior class systemwide, in terms of likelihood of employment of the students upon graduation. The program is voluntary on the part of the student. PARTNERS are asked to provide motivation for all the 1,000 students in this quartile, and jobs for as many as possible. The first major breakthrough in this program was provided by the Merit Employment Association (MEA). MEA, representing more than 80[illegible] businesses, has long sponsored Youth Motivation Day within the Atlanta School System. During the 1982-83 school year, MEA adopted a pilot program with two Atlanta Schools to add job placement to the motivation thrust. The flagship company in the pilot was Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company. The first two pilot schools were Therrell High and West Fulton

High. The first organization outside the MEA umbrella to participate in the Job Placement program was the Metro Atlanta Kiwanis International, with Douglass High.

The advisement function of the Atlanta Partnership has been two-fold. Member organizations provide officers, staff members, and employees, who are experts within the fields which the various organizations represent, to impart "in-field" knowledge and guidance to programs of many types in the school system. For example, each of the system's Magnet schools has an advisory committee that helped to develop the curriculum of the Magnet and provides continual counsel so that the curriculum and its delivery stay attuned to developments within the industry. To illustrate, the Harper Magnet School for Financial Services has representation on its advisory board from eight different banks, including the Federal Reserve.

In the other advisory capacity, members of the PARTNERSHIP are encouraged at all times to present concerns and ideas relevant to education to the school system and local colleges through the PARTNERSHIP office. This can be done by a member via a letter or telephone call to the office. In addition, the 25 member Board of Directors meets quarterly at which time any issues or concerns may be presented and aired by the Directors.

The bulk of student tutorial activity is promoted within the religious community partnership and coordinated by the Atlanta Partnership office. Employees of PARTNERSHIP member firms are also invited to participate. At the midpoint of the 1982-83 school year, more than 5,000 adult volunteers were working in the Atlanta School System. More than 1,000 of them were involved directly in student tutoring.

The description and history of the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education and its three allied organizations address the PARTNERSHIP broadly in structural, conceptual, and programmatic perspectives. Now, the four exact functions of the PARTNERSHIP office will be described briefly as represented by the four uses of the letter "c." These are: (1) Contact, (2) Communication, (3) Coordination, and (4) Consultation.

In essence, the PARTNERSHIP office acts as a brokerage firm. Contact is established with schools to determine their needs and with businesses/colleges to determine their interests and resources. Whenever needs and resources match up, appointments are set up between the parties to discuss possible collaboration.

Under the function of Communication, scheduled and unscheduled mailings, as needed, flow from the office to schools, PARTNERS, and potential PARTNERS. Everyone is kept informed on what is happening and/or needs to happen. On certain occasions, correspondence is mailed to the homes of every Atlanta Schools student.

Coordination of activities and information dissemination is continually provided to prevent duplication and gaps in service delivery.

Under Consultation, the PARTNERSHIP office provides a 24-hour, 365-day answering service so that any member of the PARTNERSHIP, or any other member of the total community for that matter, can express concerns and/or get questions answered.

At the time of the second birthday of the Atlanta Partnership of Business & Education, January 27, 1983, it was deemed appropriate to raise and answer three questions: (1) "What has the PARTNERSHIP done in two years?" (2) "What did it intend to accomplish during the two years?" and (3) "What difference has it made?"

The answers are as follows:

(1) In terms of input, more than 150 businesses, colleges, and service agencies have provided services to the Atlanta School System estimated at over 1½ million dollars. Some of these services have been in the form of cash contributions, but most have been in the form of human resources, which is the form most desired by the PARTNERSHIP.

(2) At the formation of the PARTNERSHIP, researchers from Georgia State University were given four hypotheses by the PARTNERSHIP for possible research. These were that if the PARTNERSHIP were successfully formed and maintained: a) Student attendance would improve, b) Student dropout rates would decline, c) Student academic achievement would improve, and d) Over a five-year period, crime rates in the city would decline. These were major goals which the PARTNERSHIP hoped to achieve.

(3) In terms of what difference the PARTNERSHIP has made in the first two years of its existence, it is impossible to state anything conclusively because the formal research design to measure the cause and effect relationships is not in place. The following facts, however, are a matter of record:

(A) At the midpoint of the 1982-83 school year, the student attendance rate of 94.8% systemwide is the highest ever recorded in the Atlanta School System and is a half percentage point above the record attendance of a year earlier.

(B) The 4.4% high school dropout rate of the 1981-82 school year, the latest figures available, documents a decline of 25.4% in the rate over the past two years.

(C) The 1981-82 systemwide test scores on basic literary skills, as measured by standardized tests, were the highest yet recorded since the systemwide testing program began. In addition, on the Basic Skills Tests, administered by the State Department of Education in October 1982 to all tenth-grade students in the state, Atlanta students exceeded the State projections by 8 and 19 percentage points in reading and mathematics, respectively.

(D) Crime rate figures released by the Atlanta Police Department at the end of 1982 showed that the Atlanta crime rate decreased in month-by-month comparisons of 1981, for eight consecutive months, May through December.

Backed by its own assessment of its accomplishments, the PARTNERSHIP now has established a task force to seek ways through foundations, etc., to institutionalize the organization to assure perpetuity. A proposal is being prepared to house the PARTNERSHIP within the facility of a local university so that research and teacher preparation modules can become an integral part of the overall PARTNERSHIP program. Several national foundations have expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of collaboration along the described lines.

The PARTNERSHIP logo is an equilateral triangle inscribed by the junction of the perpendicular bisectors of the three sides. The logo represents the planned equality of the three groups (public schools, colleges, and private business sector) as well as the mutuality of benefits to come from working together as PARTNERS.

The PARTNERSHIP is not a fund raising organization nor is it intended to provide "hand outs" for the schools and/or students. It is, instead, a PURE PARTNERSHIP in every sense of the word or, as its motto states, "a network of schools, businesses, and people."

January 30, 1983
By: Boyd D. Odom

COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

ATLANTA PARTNERSHIP OF BUSINESS & EDUCATION

- Executive Committee Officers, Exec. Director Superintendent of Schools
- Board of Directors
- Task Forces
- PARTNERS

ATLANTA COUNCIL PTAs

- President and Vice President of Council
- Executive Committee
- Presidents of Local Schools PTA/PTSAs

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

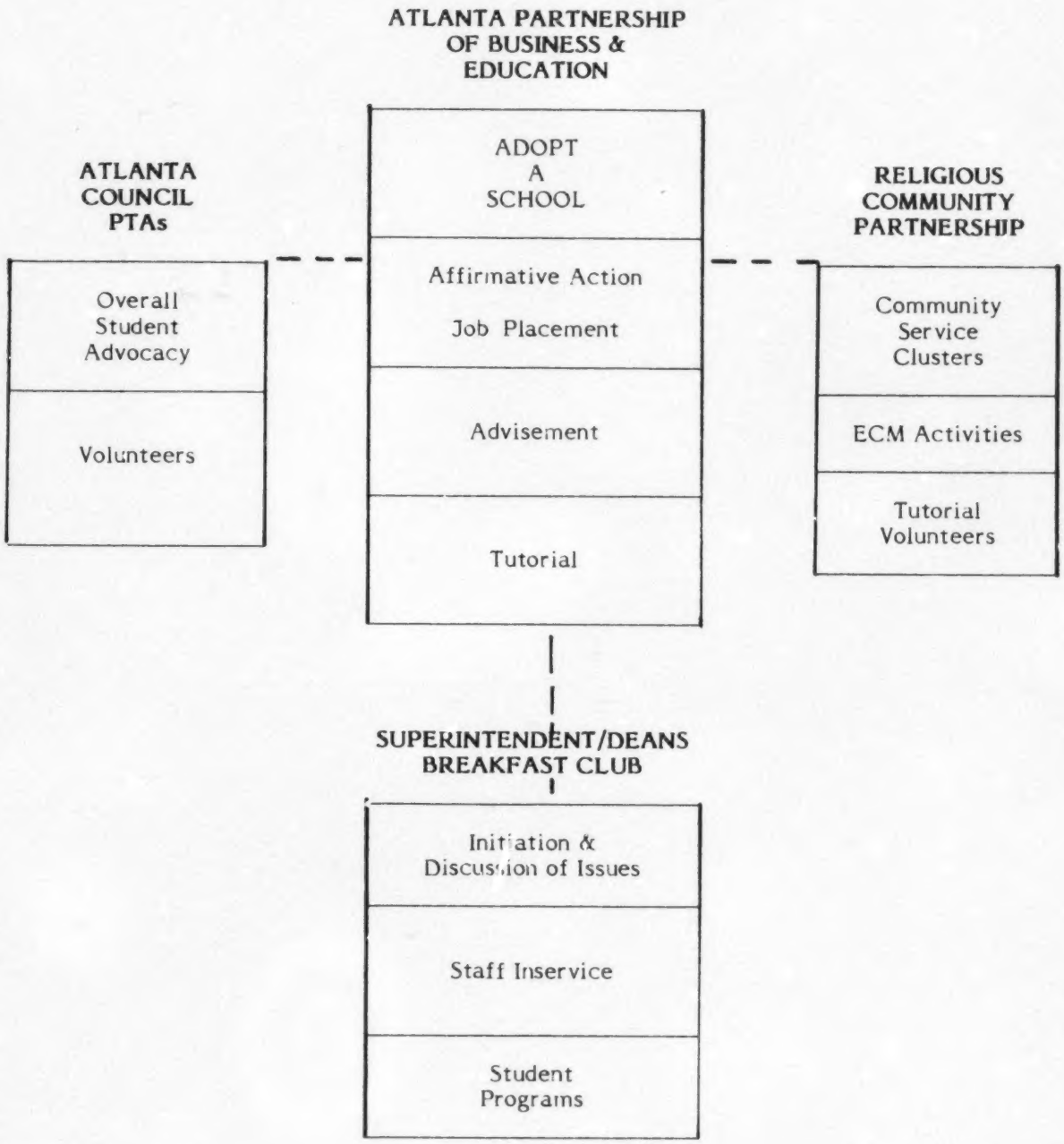
- Metro Atlanta Christian Council
- Joint Urban Ministries
- Ecumenical Community Ministries
- National Conference of Christians & Jews
- Individual Congregations

SUPERINTENDENT/DEANS BREAKFAST CLUB

- Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools
- Deans Local Colleges/ Schools of Education

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS



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ATLANTA PARTNERSHIP of BUSINESS & EDUCATION, INC.

"A network of businesses, schools, and people"

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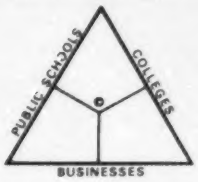

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